

VZCZCXRO3968
OO RUEHAG RUEHDBU RUEHROV
DE RUEHKB #0739/01 1641250
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 131250Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY BAKU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3236
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL IMMEDIATE
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAKU 000739

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR EUR BRYZA, EUR/CARC, ISN A/S ROOD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2017

TAGS: [AJ](#) [IR](#) [MARR](#) [MNUC](#) [PARM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ALIYEV: ON MISSILE DEFENSE, "WE'LL DO WHATEVER YOU PREFER"

REF: STATE 80555

Classified By: Ambassador Anne E. Derse per 1.4 (b,d).

11. (C) Summary: In response to reftel demarche on the proposed missile defense site in Azerbaijan, President Ilham Aliyev was quick to tell the Ambassador that Azerbaijan would do "whatever you prefer" and that Azerbaijan would be decisively on the American side in these discussions. After narrating his dismay over President Putin's public characterization of their brief and non-specific June 6 phone call on the issue, Aliyev put hand to his forehead and said that as a result of Putin's announcement, "We found ourselves in a very interesting situation. We prefer not to be in the headlines . . . We'd prefer not to have (the Qabala radar station) at all." Aliyev described Putin's proposal as involving only an "automatic, online" exchange of data from the Qabala radar station, not broader joint use or stationing of American personnel. Aliyev stressed that he had already been planning to terminate the agreement with Russia when it expires in 2012, but that he would consider extending it if the U.S. supports this proposal for missile defense cooperation. "The decision will be yours," the President concluded. Septel will report on the President's views on energy, human rights, Kosovo and the Nagorno-Karabakh peace process. End Summary.

Seeking to Reassure the West

12. (C) On June 13, Ambassador Derse called on President Ilham Aliyev to deliver reftel demarche. The Ambassador stressed the need for the U.S. and Azerbaijan to coordinate both public and private messages on this issue, stressing the need for both countries to be transparent in their dealings with Moscow. She emphasized the need to work together to avoid the perception that Azerbaijan is being used by the Russians, to which the President laughed nervously. Aliyev began by highlighting that Azerbaijan would be fully transparent with the U.S. on this as on other issues. "We have cooperation in security, military issues and anti-terrorism with the United States, not Russia. With Russia we only have minor talks on border security because we have concerns about Wahabbis coming over our borders from Russia. Otherwise we have no security cooperation," asserted the President.

13. (C) President Aliyev then provided detail on the manipulative way in which the Russians, in his view, had

approached Azerbaijan on this issue. "As clear background, we had no negotiations with Russia on this issue. (Russian FM) Lavrov mentioned briefly during his visit that Russia may offer to the U.S. data from Gabala. I told him to discuss it with (Azerbaijani FM) Mammadyarov." Aliyev continued that he then received a call from President Putin on the day the G-8 Summit started. The connection was bad and Aliyev assumed Putin was calling from his plane en route to Germany. Putin told Aliyev that he wanted to make this proposal to the Americans and that, according to the 2002 Qabala agreement, Russia had the right to share unilaterally data with third countries. Despite having this legal right, Putin said he wanted to seek Aliyev's opinion on this proposal. Aliyev told him that he could not object if Russia wanted to share information with the Americans. The proposal was to be limited to the sharing of "online" data in an "automatic regime" and there was no mention of joint usage or stationing of personnel at Qabala.

Aliyev Felt Manipulated by Putin

¶4. (C) Aliyev was annoyed because he had his experts look at the 2002 Russian-Azerbaijani agreement only to find that Article four clearly says that Azerbaijan must in advance agree to any sharing of information with third countries. Aliyev said he had not known this during the phone call with Putin. Moreover, Aliyev asked his protocol section to confirm with Putin's staff whether there would be a public release of information that the phone call had taken place. Putin's staff said that the conversation would be kept confidential.

SIPDIS

BAKU 00000739 002 OF 002

¶5. (C) "When the fact of the call was made public, we found ourselves in an interesting situation. We prefer not to be in the headlines," said the President smiling awkwardly and putting his hand to his forehead. He noted that he reminded President Putin while at the CIS Summit in St. Petersburg that Putin had once told him that Russia was building its own radar station and would not need Qabala in the future. Putin responded that Russia still needed Qabala. Aliyev then told the Ambassador that before this current issue arose he had planned to terminate the agreement with Russia when it expires in 2012. "Sometimes I plan long-term," he quickly added, clearly embarrassed that he caught himself talking about decisions beyond the end of his current presidential term in 2008. He said that from a legal point of view, Azerbaijan had covered its interests at Qabala, but that practically speaking, Azerbaijan did not want its facilities being used by Russia for unspecified purposes. "We don't have the specialists to monitor the Russians. And it's none of our business, the detection of missiles coming from the Indian Ocean. We'd prefer not to have (Qabala) at all," the President commented.

Will Take the U.S. Lead

¶6. (C) President Aliyev said that he thought that the Russians would withdraw the proposal when it becomes clear that America will not abandon its deployment of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe. Asked what he believes motivated the Russian proposal, Aliyev said that the purpose of the proposal was solely to gain political capital to undercut U.S. missile defense efforts in Eastern Europe. If, however, the U.S. did agree with Russia to share data from Qabala, Azerbaijan would support this proposal, in principle, although the President noted that Azerbaijan would not advocate for it. "We will be on your side and the decision is yours . . . We'll do whatever you prefer," concluded the President.

¶7. (C) When asked his views on the deployment of missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic, the President said that he understands U.S. concerns about potential threats and that the U.S. can do whatever it wants with its NATO allies. It should not seek permission from Russia. He added that there is a strong emotional content to this issue in Moscow because these countries were once in the Soviet Bloc and that the Russians have very tense relations with Poland.

¶8. (C) The Ambassador then asked if the President was surprised by the more expansive description of possible cooperation at Qabala. The President said that it would be difficult to say if Azerbaijan would support more than data sharing and that he had been surprised by the more expansive description of possible Russian-American cooperation at the Qabala radar station that emerged in the press. Asked about the reaction from Tehran, the President said that the Iranians were keeping quiet because they were caught off guard by this proposal as it came from their ally, the Russians.

Comment

¶9. (C) President Aliyev was at pains to try to allay any impression that he or his government had been conspiring with the Russians to surprise the U.S. with this proposal. He painted a picture of Azerbaijan being caught in an awkward position by Putin through Putin's manipulative use of misinformation and media spin. The President's tone was one of clear accommodation to U.S. desires, without any hint of seeking to impose himself or his government in the process of U.S.-Russia consultations on this issue. On the contrary, he said straightaway, "This has nothing to do with us." He asks that the U.S. try to work this out with the Russians and let his government know what the U.S. would like to do. He reiterated several times that he is committed to supporting the U.S. position.

DERSE